



CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

Statewide Assessment

September 2003

**Children's Administration
Washington**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Chapter One: Statewide Information System Capacity.....	8
Chapter Two: Case Review System.....	19
Chapter Three: Quality Assurance System.....	39
Chapter Four: Staff and Provider Training.....	59
Chapter Five: Service Array and Development.....	78
Chapter Six: Agency Responsiveness to the Community.....	108
Chapter Seven: Foster and Adoptive Home Licensing, Approval and Recruitment.....	147
Chapter Eight: Washington State Data Profiles Safety Section.....	172
Chapter Nine: Permanency.....	235
Chapter Ten: Child and Family Well-being.....	295
Statewide Assessment of Strengths and Needs.....	330
Appendixes.....	332

Introduction

The State of Washington

Washington is divided into two geographically distinct areas by the Cascade Mountain range. West of the mountains, the Interstate 5 corridor is characterized by relatively prosperous urban areas ranging from Everett in the north to Vancouver on the Washington-Oregon border. The remainder of the western part of the state consists of rural areas and smaller communities traditionally dependent on logging and fishing. East of the mountains, agriculture is the largest industry and, though there are several urban centers, the area is mostly rural in character.

Washington is a state of six million people, 1.5 million of whom are under the age of 18. There are 29 federally recognized Tribes in Washington and a total Native American population of approximately 150,000. There are well-established African-American and Asian-American communities throughout the state. There is also a fast-growing Hispanic/Latino population, which was originally concentrated in the agriculture and food processing industries of Eastern Washington, but is now expanding into both urban and rural areas all over the state. In addition, Washington is the new home to an ever-changing array of immigrants from Russia and other nations of the former Soviet Union, from both East and West Africa, and from Asia and the Pacific.

As of 2000, 10.6% of Washington's population had incomes below the federal poverty level, but the number has likely risen since then because of the current economic downturn.

Washington currently has the second highest unemployment rate in the nation and economists predict that recovery will come more slowly here than in the rest of the country. In the past two decades, Washington's economy has become more sharply divided between the prosperity created by the software, biotech, and other new (and mostly urban) industries, and the poverty and unemployment created by declines in logging and fishing and increased global competition and automation in agriculture.

High unemployment and growth in the number of low-wage jobs with no benefits are creating both more demand for health and human services and less revenue with which to provide them. Like other states, Washington's legislature has been forced to cut the state's general fund budget and reduce the level of state funding for health and human services.

Washington's Human Services System

In the early 1970s, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was created as an umbrella agency to bring together state human service programs, so that people could get comprehensive assistance with many, often interrelated, needs. Although progress has been made, the goal of integrating services has been elusive because of funding and regulatory barriers and trends towards increasing specialization of services. Today, integration of services – both within DSHS and with community partners – has re-emerged as a top priority. Service integration and alignment with community resources is now seen as a way to provide better client outcomes and to reduce costs by focusing on earlier, more comprehensive, interventions that help individuals and families solve problems more quickly.

CA is one of seven administrations within DSHS. The others are Medical Assistance, Juvenile Rehabilitation, Economic Services, Health and Rehabilitative Services (which includes mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and post-release mental health services for sex offenders), Aging and Disability Services, the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Management Services.

Most human services are provided by these DSHS agencies. However, counties and consortia of counties operate state-funded HMO-like organizations that provide mental health services and counties fund and provide most outpatient drug and alcohol treatment.

The Children's Administration

CA is organized into six geographic regions (consistent with other DSHS administrations). Across the state, there are 44 CA local offices.

At its headquarters in Olympia, CA is organized into four divisions and the Deputy Assistant Secretary Section:

- The Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Section oversees quality assurance, continuous quality improvement, staff training and accreditation efforts.
- The Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) recruits, licenses, and monitors foster homes and other out-of-home care for children. A Child Protective Services office within DLR investigates allegations of abuse and neglect in licensed out-of-home care.
- The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) includes Child Protective Services, which investigates allegations of abuse and neglect (not in licensed care settings), and provides child welfare services to families.
- The Division of Program and Policy Development provides leadership and coordination of policy, legislative relations and regulation.

- The Management Services Division provides data, research, human resources, and fiscal support.

At the local and regional level, Regional Administrators oversee the provision of services in CA's 44 local and six regional offices. At this level, there are two major divisions: the Division of Licensed Resources and the Division of Children and Family Services, which includes Child Protective Services (CPS), Child Welfare Services (CWS) Family Reconciliation Services (FRS), and the Alternative Response System (ARS).

CA has approximately 2,700 employees, and its total budget for the 2003-05 biennium is \$910 million, of which 51% comes from the state's general fund.

In the last biennium, CA provided the following services:

- Responded to a total of 95,900 requests for services;
- Responded to 79,000 referrals of abuse and neglect, concerning 80,400 children, and 18,900 referrals for voluntary services;
- Accepted for investigation or referral to alternative services 37,300 referrals concerning 45,500 children;
- Supervised care of 16,000 children in out-of-home care;
- Made 8,000 new placements in out-of-home care and supervised 7,900 exits from out-of-home care, including:
 - 5,500 reunifications with parents,
 - 1,053 adoptions, and
 - 534 guardianships.

The Child and Family Services Review

CA is making full use of the opportunity afforded by this review to assess agency strengths and challenges and to plan for the future. The CFSR is seen as an important developmental opportunity for the agency. Efforts will continue in the future to integrate the CFSR into CA's regular quality improvement activities and strategic planning process. An extensive, well-designed process with ample involvement of staff, providers, communities, families, foster parents and Tribes has been undertaken to identify and analyze issues in great detail, at every level of CA. Special consultations with Tribes and Tribal organizations, focus groups with foster parents, development and analysis of new data, and meetings with providers and other partners have ensured a thorough examination of policy and practice at every level.

A five-phase process has been designed to prepare CA for the CFSR.

Phase I consisted of a Preliminary Statewide Assessment (October 2002 – January 2003) that involved one staff representative and one stakeholder from each region of CA's four divisions. These participants met and held extensive discussions of the progress CA has made and the obstacles that impede faster improvement. This group drafted the initial lists of strengths and challenges for each of the questions posed by the review, and wrote the initial responses to the questions posed by the CFSR.

Phase II began as a process of developing short and intermediate term options to the challenges identified in Phase I. Phase II was an extended comprehensive effort which involved numerous providers, stakeholders, staff, Tribal representatives and community partners in the process. In this phase, over 100 staff and stakeholders broke into facilitated subgroups for each of the ten question areas. These groups examined data, assessed internal and external processes and reviewed risks, obstacles and opportunities facing the broader child welfare system. They collected extensive feedback from foster parents, providers, other stakeholders and staff at all levels. This collective insight was incorporated into the statewide assessment.

Phase III will be implementation of the Action Plan produced in Phase 2. Decision-making around the Action Plan is now under review by CA's Executive Management Team.

Phase IV, which is currently underway, is CA's logistical preparation for the on-site review.

Phase V will be the implementation of a process involving staff, stakeholders, and Tribes in the development of the agency's Program Improvement Plan.